

ALBERTA STREET NEWS

Volume 10, Issue 2, 2013

Vendors pay 50 cents

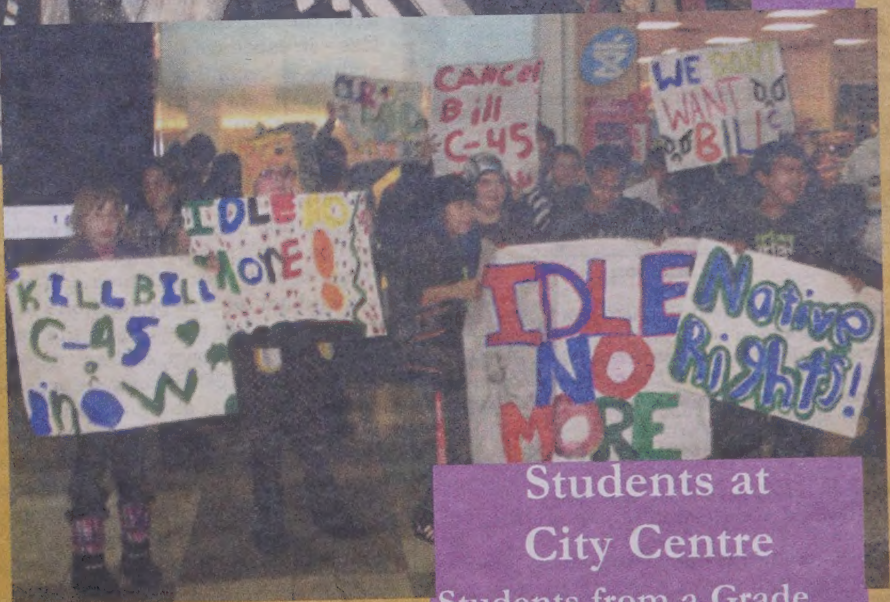
Demonstrations continue for Idle No More

Drummers at West Edmonton Mall demonstration on January 13

Photo By Jim Gurnett



More about
Idle No More
on
pages
5-6-7-8



Students at City Centre

Students from a Grade Six class were among those who gathered at Edmonton Centre on Monday, January 21. Photo by Linda Dumont

February 4-11 is the International
Network of Street Papers vendor
week. - page 2

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Alberta Street News
Volume 10 Issue 2 2013

Alberta Street News is an independent publication produced by volunteers and sold by vendors on the street.

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Mission

Edmonton Street News Society provides a voice, employment and social support to those who need these, and communicates perspectives dealing with poverty and social justice, by education and communication activities, including publishing a street newspaper

Values/Beliefs/Guiding Principles

We believe in being inclusive and encouraging
We believe that human rights are fundamental to living together
We believe that everyone deserves the opportunity to earn and control their money
We believe in journalistic and organizational professionalism and integrity
We believe the public needs to know about issues around poverty and social justice
We value community and connecting with others
We value passion and determination
We believe everyone deserves the opportunity to learn, develop and use communication skills

The views presented in this publication are those of the writers.

Homeless count results show need for more action

On October 16, 2012, 2,174 homeless Edmontonians were counted. Compared to 2010, 247 fewer homeless individuals were counted in 2012. However, changes were made in the method used in the 2012 homeless count which may account for the lower number of homeless counted. In addition, the count does not include the persons who are no longer homeless not because they found housing but because they died directly or indirectly as a result of homelessness. At the Homeless Memorials for 2011 and 2012 about 150 people were remembered, and there are others whose names were not put forward for possibly more than 200 in all.

The need for increased government commitment to funding housing is demonstrated with the release of numbers for the 2012 count of people in Edmonton who are homeless.

"Ending homelessness and ensuring people have decent homes will never be achieved until the federal and Alberta governments accept a responsibility to invest adequately in these goals," comments Edmonton Coalition on Housing and Homelessness (ECOHH) spokesperson Jim Gurnett.

"The number of homeless people counted in 2012 is virtually unchanged from the number counted in 2004. Since the Homeless Commission says almost 1800 homeless people have been housed under the 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness in the past three years, it is clear much work remains to be done," Gurnett observes.

Changes in the methodology to eliminate double counting likely account for some of the lower numbers in the 2012 count compared to previous counts, rather than actual reductions in numbers of people who are homeless.

"We need to be especially concerned about children and youth who are homeless. One third of all those counted are under 30 years of age and 13% are children," Gurnett points out. While there have been shifts in the age distribution of those counted in the older age groups, the percentage of children has remained stubbornly consistent since 2006, which ECOHH says points to failure to develop appropriate services for families with

children.

Immigrant-serving community agencies were not involved in the count, so ECOHH suggests the incidence of homelessness may be higher than the count suggests, because use of emergency shelters or living on the street is less common with this population.

"The focus of the 10 Year Plan has been people who are hard to house and who have difficulties retaining housing. It is important to address the needs of these people. But the results of the 2012 count should concern Edmontonians, because it may be evidence we are failing to prevent new people from falling into homelessness," Gurnett observes.

Recent information from Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation shows rents are increasing and the number of available units is shrinking. At the same time Edmonton is experiencing significant immigration. The risk will grow of more people being without adequate housing of their own, or being homeless and depending on emergency shelters or unsafe or inappropriate temporary measures.

"It is essential the upcoming provincial and federal budgets make substantial investments in additional non-market housing, and properly fund rent supplement programs to clear long waiting lists for affordable accommodations. The count report should be taken as a warning message to Edmontonians to contact their elected representatives and insist on resources to turn around the housing crisis.

"In 1999 there were just over 800 homeless people identified in our city. Today the number is 2.6 times greater. The economic, social and personal costs of letting this go on are gigantic. In Alberta we have the resources to make sure everyone has a decent place to call home-- and that will also ensure we have strong healthy communities," concludes Gurnett.

ECOHH

ECOHH is a coalition of organizations and individuals committed to decent affordable housing being available for all people.

The 2012 count of homeless people in Edmonton is available at the Homeward Trust website (www.homewardtrust.ca).

Meet the world's most inspiring work force

With the financial crisis still wreaking havoc on the world's economies and job markets, the fact that anyone can become homeless - irrespective of age, nationality or social status- is becoming ever more apparent, as is the vital importance of street papers.

More than 28,000 vendors every year sell their local street paper to lift themselves out of poverty. The International Network of Street Papers (INSP) unites over 120 publications in 600 cities around the world.

For many people in poverty or without a home, selling a street paper can offer a lifeline and act as a stepping stone to greater things. Whether they are on the streets of Glasgow, Cape Town, Melbourne or Milan: every single street paper vendor is part of a global family that shares in a desire to lift themselves out of poverty.

More than 28,000 vendors each year work towards this goal by selling their local street paper. The International Network of Street Papers (INSP) unites over 120 of these publications in more than 600 towns and cities around the world.

From its base in Scotland, INSP helps its members with start-up and editorial support, staff and vendor training, funding, networking and campaigns to raise awareness of their work.

The stories of our vendors are a testament to the strength and effectiveness of the street paper model, which has spread across 40 countries on six continents and earns vendors over 40 million USD per year.

"I saw many bad things on the streets but I also met people who, like me, wanted to change their lives," says Brazilian vendor Nelson Carvalho, whose drug addiction led to him becoming homeless.

For Nelson, selling Aurora du Rua on the streets of Salvador meant more than earning an income: "I have the opportunity to share my experiences with others and show them that people on the streets are human like everyone else."

Reaching a combined readership of 6 million per edition, vendors like Nelson are proud to sell the publications. He explains: "Street papers portray people living on the street with dignity and humanity and change the way society sees them."

His South African colleague Erica Phillips also believes street papers change people's perspectives on homelessness. She sold The Big Issue South Africa for seven years after being forced to quit her job when her eyesight deteriorated.

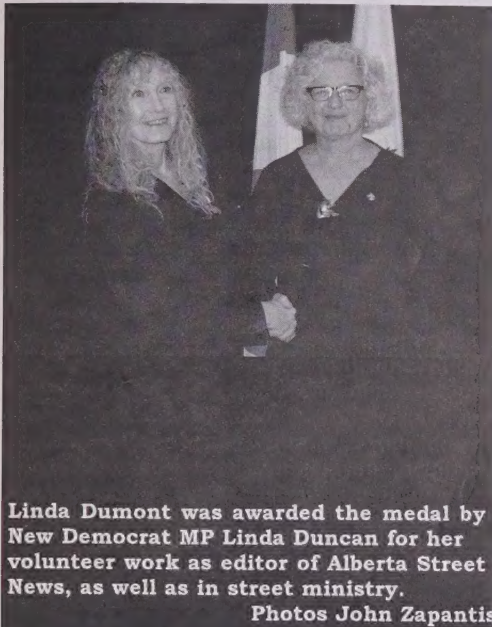
"I've gained so much and found people that have really supported me. They notice my determination and outgoing personality. I'm fortunate to have many customers who see me not just as a vendor but as a friend."

Without the street paper Erica says she could never have financed her own business, which she recently started. "I hate to think where I would be without this job. I would probably have given up, but it helped me see that there's hope."

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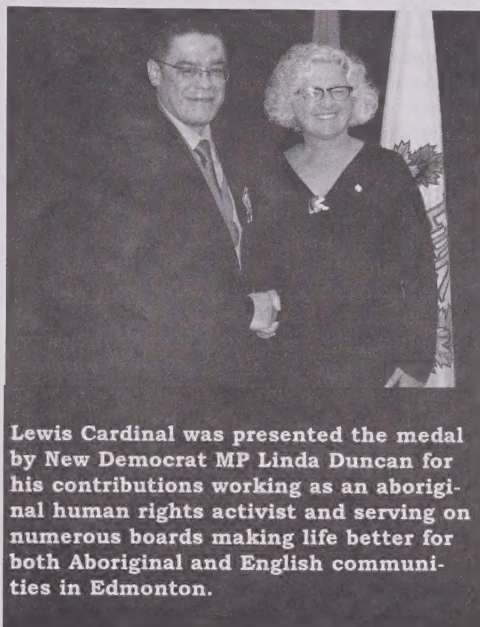
Queen Elizabeth 2nd Diamond Jubilee Medals awarded January 19

Alberta Street News board member and writer Jim Gurnett, managing editor Linda Dumont and Lewis Cardinal, Aboriginal human rights activist, were among the recipients of the Queen Elizabeth 2nd Diamond Jubilee medal January 19.

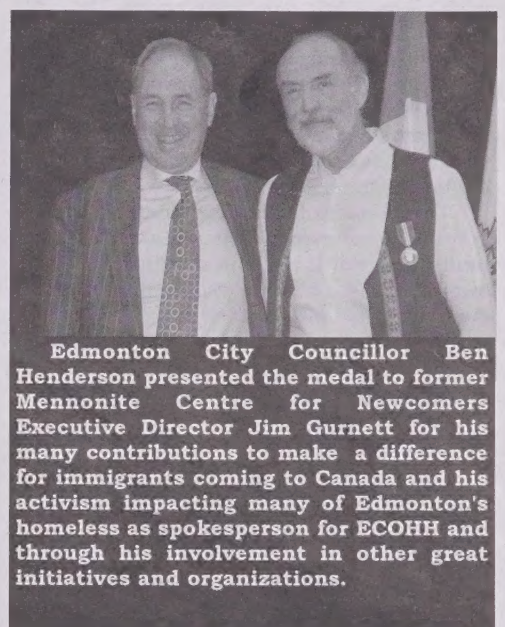


Linda Dumont was awarded the medal by New Democrat MP Linda Duncan for her volunteer work as editor of Alberta Street News, as well as in street ministry.

Photos John Zapantis



Lewis Cardinal was presented the medal by New Democrat MP Linda Duncan for his contributions working as an aboriginal human rights activist and serving on numerous boards making life better for both Aboriginal and English communities in Edmonton.



Edmonton City Councillor Ben Henderson presented the medal to former Mennonite Centre for Newcomers Executive Director Jim Gurnett for his many contributions to make a difference for immigrants coming to Canada and his activism impacting many of Edmonton's homeless as spokesperson for ECOHH and through his involvement in other great initiatives and organizations.

Edmonton Police Challenged on Privacy

Alberta's Information and Privacy Commissioner is expressing concern about the secrecy of Edmonton Police Services (EPS) around disciplinary decisions. The Commissioner issued a decision in January that asks EPS to re-consider the action taken three years ago to stop posting copies of disciplinary decisions at its website.

In its ruling the Privacy Commission points out the decisions have already been made public because they have been read publicly at the end of hearings, so not posting them simply creates difficulties in access for

anyone not at the hearing.

EPS, who have been involved in disciplinary rulings, asked the Commissioner to keep the rulings secret, citing negative impacts on their promotions (and thus income) within EPS, or in seeking employment elsewhere. However the ruling dismissed this opposition as without merit, noting the rulings have already been made public and are known within the administrative structure of EPS. The ruling further notes that claims of harm must involve the harm being unfair, but there is no evidence this is or would be the case.

The ruling agrees the decisions of hearings may hurt the reputation and advancement of people involved but says, "If the Affected Parties were found to be in violation and were disciplined, the disclosure of this information

may damage their reputations, but not unfairly."

The decision also noted that the Police Services Regulation of the province has now been amended to require any hearings with a public portion to have the decisions made available publicly, so continuing to withhold the same information about the three years involved makes no sense.

At the time of writing this story the EPS website does not make the proceedings or rulings of disciplinary hearings available at its website, but does have a message there indicating the decisions are available at no cost by contacting the EPS Freedom of Information and Personal Privacy coordinator and making a request.

By Jim Gurnett

Meet the world's most inspiring work force continued

For Charles Yost, a vendor in Portland, USA, selling Street Roots has helped him overcome a lifetime of alcohol addiction: "It got to a point where I was either going to get drunk or sell papers. It's something I can look forward to. I get to talk to a lot of people. It keeps me out of isolation."

Selling Norwegian street paper Megafon completely transformed the life of Johnny Larssen, who swapped a daily reality of drugs and violence for a dignified job. "When you work as a street paper vendor, you need to look people in the eye, share a laugh, and care about others. If you would have met me a few years ago, you would have never believed that I could do this."

For The Big Issue Australia vendor Tapiwa Chemhere, who escaped a life of violence and political oppression in Zimbabwe, it is the customers who inspire him: "If you smile and talk to me, it makes my day. I feel very encouraged. I thank all my customers for helping me."

Worldwide, street papers have helped change more than 250,000 thousand lives for the better. As the INSP network continues to expand, it is hoped that vendors' stories will inspire others to join the movement.

For all the vendors that street papers support, it is the readers who help make the difference. So wherever you go in the world: buy your local street paper.

The change is in your pocket.

By Laura Smith,
International Network of Street Papers

Does the EPS get it? I hope so, but I worry, too

Does the Edmonton Police Service get it, when it comes to officers' professionalism and ethics in their dealings with the public it serves and to which it should be accountable? We must hope so, but there are reasons to worry.

The Criminal Lawyers Association (CLA) recently obtained an internal report on the way the EPS and its officers conduct their business. The fact that the CLA was forced to fight for six years to get the report through freedom-of-information procedures is disturbing enough, if transparency and accountability are (as they should be) the criteria for judging the force's professionalism and ethics. But the contents of the report are even more disturbing.

The report was prepared by ten senior officers and constables, the EPS's head of professional standards, and its complaints director. It is generally, sometimes harshly, critical of the way some officers do their jobs, and of the way senior management tolerates what should be intolerable behaviour.

The report "reveals serious systemic problems with police training, investigations, court testimony and ethics," according to a CBC online story that includes a full copy of the document (Scathing report raises questions about EPS professionalism, Jan 15, 2013 <http://tinyurl.com/a94tumb>). The report was written six years ago, and changes for the bet-

ter have undoubtedly been made, including appointment of a new police chief. But the CBC report includes allegations from CLA president D'Arcy Depoe, and other suggestions that problems remain.

The report highlights several errors of omission and commission by officers and management. We must trust that they were dealt with appropriately and that steps were taken to ensure they are not repeated. Unfortunately, there are indications that such trust may be misplaced.

A section dealing with ride-alongs, in which civilian observers accompany officers on patrol to learn what the work entails, includes details of two alleged criminal assaults by officers on citizens, and one in which officers bad-mouthed a Crown prosecutor who was (oops!) their guest on the ride-along. The CBC report notes that, "There is no indication the assaults were reported or that any other action was taken." That is serious enough, but even more worrisome is a recommendation from the report's writers: "Members who are tasked with taking individuals on ride-alongs need to be carefully selected and provided clear direction with regard to their conduct while on the ride-along."

There can be only one objective interpretation of that statement: senior, responsible

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Does the EPS get it? I hope so, but I worry, too

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members of the EPS assume that assaults and other indiscretions by officers are common; officers believe they can act as they wish without fear of consequences. The writers seem to think such behaviour is so endemic that officers who conduct ride-alongs must be carefully selected and coached. We can only wonder what they recommend saying (or not saying) to officers who are not accompanied by witnesses who could "rat them out."

This concern is not about one or two (or several) rogue cops who let their colleagues (and us) down. It is about a culture of impunity and a climate of deception that condones the culture.

Letter to the Editor

I just finished reading, with great enjoyment, Vol. 10 of "Alberta Street News", front to back. (I am a new but regular customer in Morinville.)

Unless I missed it, I must ask why there is no section for letters to the editor? There are so many articles I would love to comment on. I recall reading once that the most read section of a news paper, magazine, etc, are the letter to the editors.

At this point I wholeheartedly support the Idle No More Campaign; however, I cannot claim the same for the Occupy Movement. With this bias in mind, Allen Sheppard's article "Idle No More: Reinventing Citizenship." Sheppard attributes the following quote "There is no such thing as society." to Margaret Thatcher, (Vol.10,pg 2.) The quote is quite inflammatory and as such it should be sourced and if in fact was stated by her it should be defined in its context.

Otherwise, I enjoyed every article I read. I was especially moved by "Childhood Toxic Imprints" (pg 10 Maria B.) All forms of abuse are especially toxic to the developing child. I admire Maria for sharing such personal memories and helpful strategies to facilitate the healing process. Not only is her story inspiring, it is also a stark reminder to those of us who strive to be good parents how careful we must be with our words.

Finally, my deepest condolences to Robert Champion. Robert rhetorically asks if "it's worth it" to go on? Of course it's worth it! His life has purpose, value, and I strongly suspect impacts many others, such as readers. A paper such as this reminds us that no matter what a persons' circumstance each and every life has value. Should Robert decide that it's not "worth it" the message of value becomes irrelevant. If it's not "worth it" then his life no longer has purpose -no value- then maybe other lives don't either? He may not intend to convey this message, should he opt out because its "not worth it", but it is a message that giving up would convey. My thoughts and prayers will be with Robert, I admire his raw honesty. It's not easy but going on is definitely worth it.

I look forward to more good reading

Theresa Nault
Legal AB

Note: Alberta Street News welcomes letter to the editor.

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Again, I acknowledge that the report was written six years ago, and things may have changed for the better. But we still hear of instances of assaults and other indiscretions by police against street people and other marginalized citizens, and because there is no transparency or accountability, we have no way of knowing the truth. We must assume the worst because, in the absence of evidence, it is the least any of us can do to advocate for citizens who are deeply alienated and marginalized. Culture, after all, is even harder to change than behaviour.

Culture matters. At its simplest level, culture is learned behaviour, as compared to nature, which is instinctive behaviour. We cannot change our instinctive behaviour, but we can learn to control and direct it: through culture. Learned behaviour can be good or bad, and what has been learned can be unlearned. There are many things about EPS

culture that we should encourage and applaud. But there were-and I fear still are- things that we should condemn, and urge officers at every level to root out.

Police perform a vital service in our communities. They are a necessary bulwark between a civil society and vigilante anarchism.

We need police. But they need us, too. They need our trust. Most importantly, they need to nurture and renew our trust at all times and in all ways.

Stopping the bad behaviour of a minority that might continue to work against our trust is the biggest challenge facing Chief Rod Knecht and the entire force. I wish them well. But I will be watching and, when necessary, challenging what I see.

So should we all.

Allan Sheppard

The Flat Taxman

A few weeks ago I went to a party at a cousin's house just outside Calgary's city limits. I always like going to these events. First, it is always great to see members of my extended family, particularly this branch of the tree and they are such nice people and generous hosts. A fun time is unconditionally guaranteed. But, secondly, these outings also allow me the opportunity to get a glimpse into the lifestyles and opinions of what I would assume are a representative sample of Calgary's oil and gas crowd. I get to interact with people I would not otherwise meet in my daily world. I am given a rare opportunity to chat with folks who generally don't share my ethical and political beliefs about economics, environmentalism, social conditions in our city and the practical imperatives of social justice.

Maybe that's why I am so excited about going to these family events - because I don't really get invited anywhere else? Could be. But I do find that there are always a couple of people who are interested in having a respectful chat about how things are, and what they could and / or should be. And at this party, I was certainly not disappointed. I ended up talking with a nattily dressed, youngish lawyer who happens to own a junior oil company. He seems to be doing rather well financially, and is currently exploring the viability of a number of overseas concessions. Anyway, as is generally the case with me, our conversation turned to the issues of taxation and royalty reviews. He was of the opinion that both are necessary not only for our local economy but also for the broader development of the host country. Obviously, I agreed with this. But our difference of opinion came in the setting of the actual rates of both taxes and the royalties on the extraction of natural resources. I will come back to the issue of royalties some other time, but what struck me was how adamant this man was that flat rate taxation was the way to go.

The lawyer argued that flat rate taxes are inherently fair because people, generally, pay the same amount. He argued that the absolute fairness is found in the absolute equality of the rate. But this is precisely the reason why I think flat rate taxes are unfair. While there may be a fleeting glimpse of a misplaced equality in flat rate taxation, there is certainly no measure of equity. Flat rate taxes do not accommodate the fact that the loss of a certain percentage of income does not have the same impact on all income levels. I know there are different tax credits available, so this is not a precise calculation, but I would argue that the results of a 10% tax on \$25,000 are greater than the same

rate on \$250,000. Sure, the amount paid by the higher income earner is significantly higher; however I would suggest that the functional impact on the quality of life and the authentic choices for social and economic participation of the lower income earner is felt more keenly. While flat taxes may have an odd egalitarian ring they are, as mentioned, not equitable.

Then, there is the issue of the tax credits and write-offs. There are certainly a lot of elements within our current taxation system to help lower one's effective tax rate. There are tax credits, for example. People can lower their rates by judicious use of instruments such as tax free saving accounts, RRSP's, and donations to charities and political parties. With the advice of a good accountant, or just by keeping up to date with the current business news, there are lots of ways to reduce one's taxes. But, sadly enough for working class Canadians, these are usually based on the notion that one has the surplus funds to be able to take advantage of these so-called opportunities. If you are struggling to meet the daily requirements of living on inadequate wages, you generally will not have the money to make these instruments truly work for you. Once again, there is a measure of face equality here in that these instruments are available for all to use if they so choose; but the reality is that many people cannot afford to do so. Therefore, the provision of choice is largely illusory.

By this time, I sensed a bit of a chill creeping into our conversation, so I changed tack and we started to talk about Madagascar. My cousin heard the word and was instantly interested until he realized we were talking about the country not the movie. He then left. But my new friend and I chatted about national governments buying up huge tracts of land for logging in the country, the coup a few years ago, traffic in Antananarivo and lemurs. Anyway, the lawyer and I ended the evening amicably.

So, gentle reader, I am sure you can see why my social engagements are few and far between. But, sometimes, we need to act like Amos and use whatever forums we can to advocate for a more just and inclusive society. Taxes may seem boring, but they provide the means necessary to pay for the building of that society. That being said, flat rate taxes are not the way to go if we want to achieve a just society and it is imperative that, instead, we investigate and implement models of progressive taxation for Alberta.

Timothy Wild

What's An Indian? and Other Tales From the Federal Court

On January 8, 2013 the Federal Court ruled on a 13-year-old court case about the status of Métis and non-status Indians. The Court declared "that Métis and non-status Indians are "Indians" within the meaning of the expression "Indians and lands reserved for Indians" in s 91(24) of the Constitution Act, 1867;" (Daniels v. Canada, 2013 FC 6)

This is important, because "Status Indians" have certain rights and benefits like on-reserve housing and education, and in certain situations don't have to pay federal, provincial and territorial taxes. None of these benefits have been available to Métis and non-status Indians. This has created a situation where, in the government's own words (in a memorandum to Cabinet from the Secretary of State dated July 6, 1972):

"The Métis and non-status Indian people, lacking even the protection of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, are far more exposed to discrimination and other social disabilities. It is true to say that in the absence of Federal initiative in this field they are the most disadvantaged of all Canadian citizens." (Ibid.)

This is an interesting case, because it has seen the Government of Canada as a Defendant in a court case about the rights of its own citizens. Further, the Government of Canada has, according to the presiding judge, made numerous attempts to curtail the court case, and as part of their final arguments asked the Court to refuse to rule on the matter. This, in spite of an estimated \$5 Million of taxpayer money spent thus far.

It is the beauty of Canada's legal system that ordinary Canadians, people with a culture and an identity that they honour and want to see recognized, can take their own government to court, and, in this case, win.

It reflects to the veracity of Canada's legal system that the Federal Court relied on an extensive analysis of historical documents

and expert opinion to take into consideration as much as it could in its judgment.

It is absurd to suggest that Canada's court system and system of justice is beyond reproach, but this case highlights the difference between how a court case is decided and how many average Canadians make up their minds about the same issue.

The comments submitted to newspapers and websites have common themes:

1) The Indian Act and other rulings such as this create a racist and classist society where First Nations enjoy more privileges than others.

2) There are millions of dollars being given to the First Nations already and they are wasting most of it. This is going to cost the everyday taxpayer more and it will never be enough.

3) Just because someone in the past mistreated the First Nations does not mean that we should have to pay for it forever.

These arguments could be answered by others:

1) The First Nations were never conquered in Canada. The treaties were arrangements between sovereign nations. The First "Nations" ceded rights to the Canadian "nation" for a huge amount of land which they had formerly occupied in return for certain privileges and rights. That's what we're living on now, and along with all the resources under and above the ground is what gives every one of us our livelihood.

2) Those of us who are non-First Nation have ancestors who chose to leave their countries and come here. The First Nations did not choose to have millions of people overrun the land they had lived on for thousands of years and force them into a completely different way of life.

3) It is critical that we respect treaties and contracts. If we cannot honour an agreement our country made 100 years ago,

what's stopping us from refusing to honour agreements we made 50 years ago, 20 years ago, yesterday?

The point to these corresponding arguments is this - there is an argument for everything. That's why we have a judicial system in order to provide a ruling on arguments, especially ones that are difficult to decide. This particular case took thirteen years, millions of dollars and a hearing which took into consideration the entire time frame of First Nations and non-native contact in Canada. It is 173 pages long.

For those who have a real interest in First Nations relations, I highly recommend a reading of the entire judgment. You can find it on the Federal Court's website at <http://decisions.fct-cf.gc.ca/en/2013/2013fc6/2013fc6.html>.

For those who are scared that we will be inundated with demands for cash and will be in debt forever because of this ruling, they can be assured that it does not force the Government of Canada to provide any specific benefits to Métis and non-status Indians. That will be left to the politicians to decide.

However, as the people who elect politicians, how we feel about First Nation rights is important. With an issue as basic to our country as this, it is absolutely critical that we think, long and deeply, about the basis of our opinions.

Eric Rice

Words are powerful, no words is even more powerful!

Dane had a speech pathologist from birth because of his diagnosis of Down Syndrome. My initial thought was 'really speech therapy, he's not going to be talking yet!'. It was a pilot-project to help with feeding and speech issues. We followed the therapies and recommendations. He was pushed into starting solids at 4 months and I didn't know better so I didn't push back. We saw some successes and some failures. He had chronic runny nose and congestion from the get-go and that complicated the eating and drinking in a significant manner. Who wants to eat when they can't breathe?! After various medications, two specialists and two surgeries (adenoids and tonsils) he was able to breathe! Eating, however remains a struggle.

My guy, at just over two years of age was reaching milestones; he crawled, walked, and was even making some word approximations! It was an exciting time! Huge accomplishment, these four words (ball, mine, mama and cow). We were using some sign language and although he still lacked the dexterity to do many of the signs, he definitely understood several.

I was pregnant with our second child and as busy as ever bringing Dane to his various appointments, playgroup, physiotherapy, occupational therapy and speech therapy etc. (He is a healthy boy, I cannot imagine the demands on those who have serious health concerns!). Everything was going great. The second pregnancy was worry-free. Dane was making slow but steady progress.

Already past my due date, and being concerned that I would go into labour while my husband was out of town and I'd have no one to look after Dane, my mom came to stay for a few weeks. My son is true "Nana's boy" so this was great for all of us. Our efforts to expand his communication attempts were

with some recommendations by a Speech Pathologist; putting desired items in clear containers or slightly out of reach so that he'd need to ask for them; repetition of certain words, emphatic verbal praise and clapping for his attempts. He loved to have an audience!

I recall many visits to a therapists' office where they'd ask "can he do.....?". My answers were typically 'no, I haven't seen that yet'. Then his natural attention and praise-seeking self would show them that he could in fact do what they were asking, even if only for a second. His little defiant streak showed up to prove mom wrong, I'm sure!

The night I finally went into labour with my daughter, my son spoke the clearest word I ever heard him say. This was no word approximation - it was completely intelligible. Both my mom and I heard it. He said "Help". I was thrilled.

It was the last word he ever spoke.

This single memory, this tiny little remembrance is so painful. It represents the loss of a significant skill, the anxiety over his future, the despair of not knowing if he'll ever speak or if he'll ever be able to tell me his feelings beyond simple requests for items with his communication device.

His final word being "help," plays on my mind. Logically I know it was just a word, used in context while he was reaching for a magnet on the fridge but part of me emotionalizes this like it was a message from him. That emotion, which for some may be empowering, is for me debilitating. If I allow myself to, I would repeat that in my head over and over and fall into a huge pit of depression which does none of us any good but, still it plays.

Dawne Hammarschmidt



PETER GOLDRING
Member of Parliament
Edmonton East

THE CANADIAN FLAG: A BRIEF HISTORY

The maple leaf is but the latest in a series of flags that have flown over what has become Canada. Starting in 1497, John Cabot raised the Cross of St. George over Newfoundland for the King of England. Thirty-seven years later Jacques Cartier planted the royal fleur-de-lis for the King of France. In 1759 came the arrival of the Royal Union Flag for England and in 1801, the Union Jack.

The search for a uniquely Canadian flag began in 1925, when more than 2,600 designs were received by Parliament, but never voted on.

In 1964 Prime Minister Pearson's government held 46 sittings, hearing from historians and citizens.

By October 1964, the number of designs had been narrowed to three:

- a Red Ensign with the fleur-de-lis and the Union Jack;
- a sprig of three maple leaves between blue bars;
- a stylized maple leaf on a white square flanked by red bars.

The single maple leaf design was endorsed. The House of Commons approved it on Dec. 15, 1964, followed by the Senate. Canada's national flag was proclaimed by Queen Elizabeth II on Jan. 28, 1965 and inaugurated on Feb. 15, 1965.

The combination of red, white and red in three bold, vertical stripes was first formally recognized in Canada's very first War Veterans Medal in its identifying ribbon issued by Queen Victoria to Canadian war veterans who fought to protect Canada against the Red River Rebellion of 1870 and the Fenian Raids. The medal itself had "Canada" very prominently embossed and garlanded by maple leaves.

In 1921, King George V proclaimed that red and white were Canada's official colours.

The flag of Canada, wherever it flies, represents the English and French linguistic reality in a great land of Aboriginal beginnings that have been enjoyed by a global culture within a shared union called Canada.

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On Sharing the Work of De-colonization



My name is Jenika Watson. I was born and raised in Kainai territory (South-western Alberta). I am indigenous to a land over the ocean that I have never seen. I love this land we call Canada, it is my home. It is my honour to stand up for this land and water and the rights of Indigenous people. I am so thankful for the great love and excellent guidance of the grassroots women leaders of the Idle No More movement. In many ways, I have been waiting and preparing for this all my life. Today I want to share a little but about sharing the responsibility for de-colonization, and about solidarity and becoming an ally.

I don't know a lot, but as I understand

Idle No More, it's not just about Bill C-45 and the devastating changes to environmental laws, nor it is about Chief Spence and her great sacrifice to gain the attention of policy makers. It's the knowledge and understanding that 500 years of colonization, genocide, assimilation, abuse of children, and now a new kind of colonialism through oil industry can really have a negative effect on people. How much more can we tolerate? And how can humans with a beating heart think it's ok to see third world conditions for our neighbors in such a rich land? It seems to me that if we are not actively tearing down the systems of oppression - then we are complicit in holding it up. I'll say that again. If

we do not commit to the hard work of actively listening to each other, of modeling ways of being in community and rebuilding our country in a way that honours all life... if we are not willing to speak up when lies are told and people are suffering - then we are consenting to continued colonization of this land and people. I am a part of this movement because I want to help build a society where all people are safe, have a home and community and sustainable livelihood.

We are all bound by the treaties. I didn't sign them with my own hand, but we have all inherited treaties as we were born on this land or chose to make Canada our home. Many Canadians think that Treaties are just for the First Nations, but they not. Our ancestors made treaties for all of us born here or who come to make a home here. They are living agreements for the benefit of our relationships and they give us a map in how to treat each other and the land. All governments, federal, provincial and municipal have defaulted on this contract. I am a part of this movement because I want my government to honour the historical relationship which allows for us to live in peace as equal and different.

In joining with the Idle No More movement we have a real chance to challenge the legitimacy of the colonial government as Indigenous people and women are the traditional keepers of the land. Many settlers (non-aboriginal Canadians) are wondering how to support Idle No More. Many non-natives want to be mindful of culture, of past hurts, and we don't always know the right way to behave. But please, do not let your fears stop you! There are barriers that separate our thinking into "Us and Them", but there ways to tear down barriers and build bridges.

'Solidarity' and 'allies' are words that I have been considering a lot, especially since Dec 10th when I attended the first Idle No More rally. To me, solidarity means that while I may not share a common experience, I recognize that our humanity is tied up together. For me to live a good life, you must also have access to a good life. Solidarity means that I commit to hearing you and to working toward equity and fairness. Australian Aboriginal leader Lila Watson said at the 1985 UN Women's Conference, "If you have come here to help me you are wasting your time. But if you come because your liberation is bound up with mine - let us work

Editorial

INM 101: Introduction to the Idle No More movement

Ignorance comes in many forms. There is the ignorance of wilfulness: "Don't bother me with your facts; my mind is made up." There is the ignorance of indifference: "I don't know, and I don't want to know; I just want to get on with my life." There is the ignorance of circumstance: "I never had a chance to learn about the facts, the history, or the issues; I don't know where to start."

Idle No More's founders, organizers, participants, and supporters encounter all three variants (and others) as they act in peaceful ways to educate each other and Canadians. Their issues have been around for as long as Canada has existed (and before that when Aboriginal Canadians lived directly under the British Crown). They were brought to a head by two omnibus, so-called budget, bills that were rammed through Parliament last year by Prime Minister Harper's Conservative government: bills C38 and C45.

The third group is the proper audience for INM's education and awareness activities. That audience includes many citizens of its own communities, whose education often alienates them from their cultures and histories.

The first two groups are important only to the extent that they do and say things that distract from facts, history, and issues that INM wants to discuss. It is frustrating to note that both groups include members of Canadian media who report and comment on

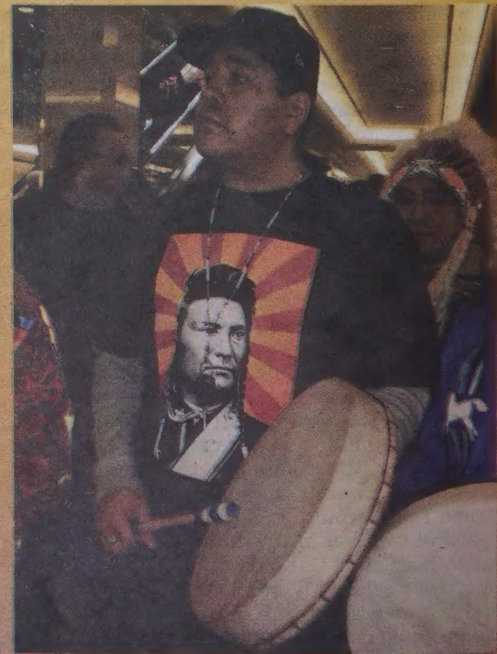
INM, its goals, and activities.

One of the biggest frustrations is the tendency, deliberate or careless, to lump INM together with Attawapiskat leader Teresa Spence's actions and comments. Chief Spence started her protest a month after INM began; INM did not ask her to act as she has; she did not ask INM for permission. Spence is respected and supported by her community; she is entitled to and capable of making her own choices.

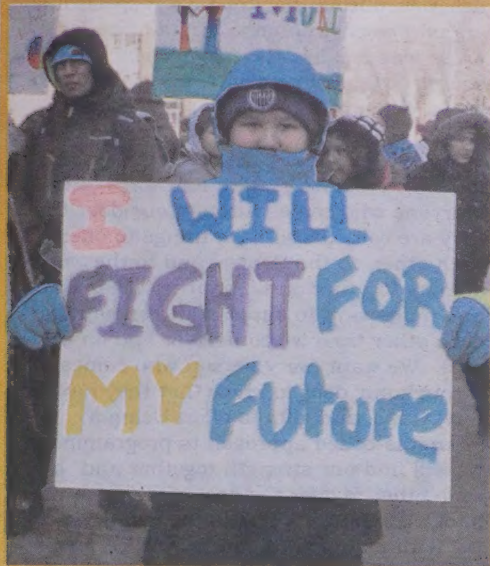
INM supports Spence in solidarity, because she comes from the same place as most Aboriginal people across Canada and aims at the same goals as the movement; that is the only connection. Perversely, our wilfully or indifferently ignorant government and media tar INM with the same brush they use to demonize and demean Chief Spence.

Mainstream media have generally accepted and spun the government line on Spence's protest. There is plenty of coverage in alternative media that credibly challenges the spin but does not get much attention. Accusations of mismanagement aimed at Spence ignore the fact that she was in office only for a small portion of the time covered by a supposedly objective, negative auditor's report; beyond that the audit details are similar to the kinds of mismanagement identified by successive auditors general to the

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Some words for the Idle No More Round Dance & Rally in Edmonton, Jan 11, 2013



"With the thermometer at -20 hundreds of people gathered January 10 to speak out at Canada Place about the importance of respect for the treaties. Toques and blankets and the energy of a shared concern about the issues helped keep everyone warm."

Photos by
Jim Gurnett

together." I am part of this movement because I do believe that our liberation is bound together, and I believe in the important work we can do together.

As non-natives, if we stand in solidarity with indigenous struggles and work towards our shared liberation, we might call ourselves Allies. An ally takes responsibility for educating themselves and begins the work of decolonizing their own mind, recognizing their own privileges and oppressions. It is not the responsibility of Indigenous people to educate settlers. (Although I deeply appreciate when an indigenous person takes the time to share protocol or a story with me, I don't expect that I am so special as to take up a lot of their time.) In the time of information at our fingertips - ignorance is a choice. There are many who choose ignorance. Don't waste your time trying to educate those who aren't ready to listen. Read, listen and discover for yourself what the legacy of colonialism means to you. Speak only for yourself. Don't waste your time feeling shame for what you did not do, but use your energy to reach out, be of service and build relationships. You will probably make some mistakes. Stand on the front lines, not just in silent support. An ally is always learning. An ally is committed for the long haul.

Honoring Indigenous, women leadership is so important as we attempt to shift away from power-crazed, money-centered colonial governments. We know that the problems we are facing now will not be solved by the same

minds that created them. Even as we hold up indigenous leadership we know that this is not only an Indigenous issue, or an environmental issue or a women's issue - Idle No More is all these things and more! Look around you.... See the people standing around you. May we see each other as whole, complex and beautiful! So let us work together for the children, the land and animals, the water and the air. Let us work for the future, but let us also work for now. For the person next to you whose eyes you can look into. As all our feet touch Mother Earth, we really are in this together! Let us walk and dance and work together in courage, beauty and fierce love.

Thank you for hearing me.

By Jenika Earthwalker

Jenika has lived in Edmonton for the past 10 years, learning how to live in a diverse community and unite spirit with environmental and social justice. Jenika works for a local non-profit agency serving newcomers to Canada. She is beginning to offer community skills workshops to grassroots communities based in non-hierarchical decision making and anti-oppressive practices. Contact Jenika.earthwalker@gmail.com for more info.

About 2000 people gathered at West Edmonton

Mall for the Idle No more demonstration

Jan. 13



Come Check out The New Neighbours



Evan Thomas

Being homeless can be a lonely and isolating experience. But, if you find yourself homeless on Edmonton's southside you no longer need to struggle on your own. A modest storefront location on 104 St. houses what we hope will become a great asset to the community. The Neighbour Centre, an initiative of the Edmonton Do Likewise Society, is a community Drop-In Centre that serves homeless and at-risk adults on Edmonton's southside. It is the first Drop-In Centre for the adult population on the southside, and we are very excited to be up and running.

The Edmonton Do Likewise Society was formally incorporated as a non-profit Society in 2009, the initiative of a large group of community stakeholders who wanted to offer

a practical response to issues of poverty and homelessness in south Edmonton, but it is the product of a longterm vision of a place that could offer respect, community, safety, and services to those on the margins in south Edmonton.

We know that many individuals who are homeless on the south side stay on the south side. The southside community is very much a peaceful community. Many tell us that they feel more vulnerable in the downtown area. The need for a place where southside people could come and feel respected, and access services and programs that could connect them with healthy community and support, has long been obvious. The Neighbour Centre is that place. Many things can happen that can land people in a

vulnerable position on the streets. If that's where you find yourself, come see us. We're here to help.

We offer basic services like laundry, showers, washrooms, computer access, phones, coffee, and light snacks. We are a safe haven from the streets, a respectful and supportive environment, and a place for those who feel like they're on the margins of society to connect with friends, neighbours, and a supportive community.

The journey towards wholeness is a journey we're all on, a journey we can only take together. We seek to find ways to show everyone who comes through our door that they are valued and have things to offer to each other, to the Centre, and to the world. Joining together on the journey means we find more ways to support and encourage each other than we could ever find on our own. We want every person who comes through our door to know that they have dignity, value, and gifts to offer. Using a strengths-based approach to programming, we will find our strength together and help each other to offer the best of what we have to our community, and to the world.

With plans now being developed for programs in healthcare, music, arts, employment, addiction and mental health support, and a strong interest in social enterprise, we hope that many will find what we offer exciting. Open Monday to Thursday from 9a.m. to 1p.m., and every night from 6 till 9:30p.m., you can find us at 7221 104 St; ten blocks south of Whyte Ave by the Strathcona Bottle Depot. We want the Neighbour Centre to be a place the whole community can believe in and be proud to support. We are your neighbours. Come join us on the journey together.

Evan Thomas

Photo By Lysanne Lessard

Editorial

INM 101: Introduction to the Idle No More movement

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Conservative government and its predecessors in their own administrations.

Prime Minister Harper, like his predecessors, can make and therefore (it seems) presume to break accountability rules intended for them, and with impunity. In Chief Spence's case, spurious demands for accountability lead to personal attacks that focus on her appearance and relationships, strategically diverting attention from the issues she wants to raise. Anyone who wants to balance the scale can go here: <http://tinyurl.com/c6cu6pd> and here: <http://tinyurl.com/acap88a>

What are the issues INM and Chief Spence want to raise?

To learn about the big picture go here: <http://tinyurl.com/cwe5crd>

For easily digestible summaries, go here: <http://tinyurl.com/ap58a7z> and here: <http://tinyurl.com/bdjy4g>

There is no lack of clear, concise statements of goals and objectives from INM, the Assembly of First Nations, and others. Yet government and the media, operating within self-imposed and purpose-built silos, seem intent on remaining ignorant: none so blind

as those who will not see; nor so deaf as those who will not hear.

That doesn't mean the issues and ways to address them are simple or easy. The big-picture link above explains the complexity of the challenge we are now forced to face.

Another link leads to a long examination of treaties and the treaty relationship that are central to everything INM wants to achieve: <http://tinyurl.com/afkdo6r> Still another leads to an explanation of why and how the federal government is both stealthily and openly changing the treaties and the treaty relationship without consultation and with aggressive lack of goodwill: <http://tinyurl.com/b6pe3wo>

Why is the government doing this? It is clear from the words and behaviour of the prime minister, cabinet ministers, and MPs that the Conservative government has ideological issues with the notion of treaties and treaty relationships with First Nations and Aboriginal Canadians. Sometime mentor and constant fellow traveller University of Calgary professor Tom Flanagan is always a good source for a stark presentation of the straight Conservative goods: <http://tinyurl.com/axcwot8>

Flanagan's ideology is given weight and urgency by the Conservative government's blatantly, arrogantly open admiration for and aggressive support of the petroleum and pipeline industries, whose demands are shown here: <http://tinyurl.com/b62ex7b> and here: <http://tinyurl.com/dyvx6yv>

Note that the letter reached through the links directly recommends undermining or removing laws and regulations that affect in many ways every First Nations and Aboriginal community in Canada. It implicit-

ly attacks the Indian Act. Yet it is addressed only to the ministers of natural resources and the environment. The people most directly affected are treated as non-peoples, as Orwellian non-persons.

Note also that within one year, bills C38 and C45 delivered everything demanded in the letter. When, outside of wartime, has any government acted so quickly on so complex an issue?

Finally, we offer the comments of a non-Aboriginal teacher who has taken the time to learn and is taking the time to teach his students about the issues:

<http://tinyurl.com/ay4ybg8>

If, after making your way through this daunting assignment, you understand and support INM, we are sure the movement will welcome you and urge you to share our links, and others you may find in your research, with Facebook friends, Twitter followers, and members of your communities.

If you choose, instead, to support the government, you will do so on a foundation of basic knowledge.

Postscript: Public libraries throughout Alberta offer free internet access and instruction for readers who do not have in-home access to explore the links.

For anyone interested in an Edmonton connection, the Edmonton Public Library has prepared and documented a history of the relationship between the city of Edmonton, the federal government, and the Papaschase Band that once had a reserve that included much of what is now southeast Edmonton:

<http://tinyurl.com/a24ea29>. Allan Sheppard



A Rory Story

Learning from Life's Experiences

I was sick for 10 days in December. I managed quite well for about the first 6 days but the other days I was very frustrated. I felt lonely because I was so much on my own - I was afraid of making other people sick if visited with them. I got depressed, had trouble making decisions, and was angry that I couldn't do the things that I wanted to do.

But Jesus - He was teaching me to come to Him for help: to pray with Him and with people on the phone when I couldn't be out with them, to let go of all my plans, to trust Him to work things out and to restore me to health.

I think that the most helpful and yet the most difficult and painful thing to do in life is to surrender all to Jesus: all our plans, our relationships (especially with family and friends), our health, our past, future and present, and everything that we have and

Is there freedom in madness? Insight? As a person certified as suffering from paranoid schizophrenia and depression, I feel particularly qualified to answer these questions. And I would answer with a very qualified "yes".

Yes, there is freedom. At least in stages of madness. For me, there were moments of devil-may-care, uninhibited release from convention. But they were infinitely overshadowed by the moments of terror. Insight? At stages, yes. Conventional wisdom states that depressives have a more realistic view of things than most. But insight into one's affliction is eventually lost as the illness progresses, sometimes irretrievably so.

I've always been fascinated by mental illness, no doubt because I felt at odds with the world around me. Too, my maternal grandmother's stays in hospital, shrouded in mystery, compelled me to read and be attracted to stories of breakdown. The Snake Pit, excerpted by Reader's Digest, terrified and thrilled me in elementary school. In Junior High, One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest held sway over my imagination. That both of these works were anti-psychiatry was a sign of the times. It was an era of finger-pointing, particularly in the direction of mothers, and de-institutionalization.

I used to think that tardive dyskinesia, that unfortunate side effect of older antipsychotic medication which resulted in involuntary movements of the tongue, mouth and

Teach the Speech Chapter 7 There is no use for Abuse

It is all Gnomette's, Gnome's and their guardian's, jobs to work together. To help our earthly planet, (That has unfortunately been taken for granite by only the naïve and negative humanoids) better.

Working together is the solution for all of the world's pollution. Oh Yeah! Man to our race or specie's are classified as a humanoid; he also lives amongst us Gnomette's and Gnome's in a world that only seems like it is being destroyed.

To Dwarves' sometimes both man and woman are considered a barbaric creature. They are not to be known to a Gnomette or Gnome as the main feature. We will not accept being condemned by woman or man, telling us a dwarf is a slob. All dwarfs are clean and full of self-esteem. We are always playing, sometimes working or even looking for a better job!

Why pray tell! When man or woman does yell!
Us Dwarfs plug our ears, run with skill and hide our tears.
Yes! Naïve Humanoid's have brought upon us many fears over the years.

In the beginning when Gnomette's and Gnome's are born they are only teeny and tiny. Society should not let woman or man tan their little behind!
Because being kicked, punched or slapped out is no thrill. That is why I teach all little Dwarves' to run with skill
In our new world there is no use for physical sexual or verbal abuse. It is to my delight to say loudly and proudly.
That all Gnomette's and Gnome's do not fight.

When both man and woman were born, right in the beginning, they were also not winning. These creatures were once just like all baby dwarfs, "a little stinker." Why they even try to deny!
That they ran around their own parents home's in dirty diaper.

Now that is enough about this man and woman topic...
I do not want you to think every naïve humanoid is a reject.
We want man thinking like Gnomette's and Gnome's so someday they just might be...perfect.

The end! Thank you Thank you Thank you

Now the time is right for me to disappear out of sight.
I am in a hurry so I have to scurry.

Written by Rory P Gaudon
©2004 Rory Gaudon
Published in Calgary Street Talk May 1999

are. All through our lives we lose our health, material possessions, homes, jobs, family and others. I think that the hardest thing to lose is people - through them shutting us out of their lives, running away and through death. Our own death is of course the final surrender - when we surrender totally to Jesus, when we give up everything and

everyone but Jesus. We never have to let go of Him - He promises to always be with us and that when we leave this earth, we will be with Him forever and with others who have loved and followed Him! Thanks be to God!

Judy Brown

Mental Illness and Recovery

extremities, was a natural result of old age. What I didn't know was that those affected were the residents discharged from the psychiatric wards to nursing homes and room and board facilities. For some reason, I seem to have noticed a number of these afflicted individuals as a child. When my mother told me the individuals were suffering medication side effects, I was frightened.

When I was in college I discovered Sylvia Plath. Her confessional poetry and death by suicide influenced my writing and worldview. My depression became a poetic credential.

I went to a public psychiatrist more out of curiosity than a desire to be healed. I chose talk therapy over medication, and felt buoyed by my sessions. I don't know why I terminated the appointments, except that I felt much better.

At 24 I felt the stirrings of something seriously awry with my mind. I phoned a psychiatric hospital, stating that I thought I needed to be admitted. The person who spoke to me on the phone asked me a few questions and advised that I was fine. I wasn't hearing voices. I wasn't suicidal. But I was correct in that I was experiencing early, or prodromal, symptoms of schizophrenia. Long, drawn out sessions with a professor who practises philosophical counselling may have been what kept me from totally losing touch with reality. Whatever the case, his recommendation of works by the renegade psychiatrists R.D. Laing and Thomas Szaz

confirmed my suspicions that my family and experiences in my formative years were responsible for my unease.

Years passed, punctuated by brief spells of "stress". I withdrew from university. I was sporadically employed, my longest tenure being two years. I remained in society, but one could say not of it, albeit in a negative sense. I was disassociated from consensual reality on many occasions, at times emotionally, at times cognitively.

When I did have a severe psychotic break at the age of 36, I suffered from a loss of insight. I was convinced my delusions and hallucinations were real. Although involuntarily committed to hospital, as I was a danger to myself, I refused treatment. When I finally broke down and accepted treatment, I was in another province, in a strange city. As the medication began to take effect and I took stock of my situation, I experienced harrowing loneliness, sorrow and shame. My self stigma was overwhelming.

After returning to my home city, I attended a support group for persons with schizophrenia and slowly began to accept my condition. The medication helped immeasurably, and gradually insight returned, allowing me to accept treatment and seek out support. Family support has been crucial. Those whom I blamed for my situation stood by me. My regret at having bought into the paradigm of the schizophrenogenic mother is great. My

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The Legacy of Our Dysfunctional Parents have been imprinted in our core beliefs



Children's knowledge about themselves is developed throughout their childhood. The foundation of what they think about themselves is formed through the opinion of the parents and if your parents were dysfunctional your thinking about yourself will be dysfunctional. Children develop their core identity through their experiences and if the child is faced with disapproval, criticism, and abuse in any form the child identity will be misinformed. Children base their beliefs on what they experience; a child looks to their environment as a mirror showing them whether they are lovable, worthwhile, valuable and accepted. How they see themselves when they are growing up will have an influence on their self esteem.

The problem is that children cannot understand that family problems and unmet needs are not their fault, but because children are always blamed, they will believe that the problems are their fault, and that something must be wrong with them. In this kind of environment the child will develop a very strong core sense of inadequacy, shame and guilt. Children are the ones that end up paying for what their parents went through in their childhood. This is the toxic legacy that "keeps on giving".

Parents coming from dysfunctional families, choosing to medicate themselves in order to heal their wounds, put their children in a very toxic environment. In my case my father chose to medicate himself with alcohol; alcohol gave him an identity, through alcohol he was able to have the courage and the excuse to abuse his family behind close doors. In my books this is the work of a "coward". Little children are unable to defend themselves.

My parents incompetence made their expectations unachievable. My father wanted his children to have blue eyes. Only one of my sister has amber coloured eyes, my mother was beautiful and she had the most beautiful blue eyes so we all wanted to have her eyes but no one had them. My father was a very handsome man with beautiful brown eyes and four of his five children have brown eyes.

It wasn't just eye colour but for my father looks were of great importance and unfortunately I was not born in a way that met his specifications. I grew up receiving a clear message that I did not meet the specifications of my father, and I always felt the emotional absence of my mother.

When children believe that something is wrong with them, they become chameleons for survival and they are constantly adjusting

their presence and their behaviour to please others. They disconnect from their real selves and begin to try to feel, think and behave the way they believe others wants them to. They develop a flawed self. As soon as their true self is replaced by the flawed self it forms their identity as flawed individuals.

It is so sad that a child has to give up his true identity in order to survive in such a hostile environment. And unfortunately, he or she will live his or her life with this belief forming a core of inadequacy.

At a tender age I began to view the frame of the family and as the divine human being that I was supposed to be, my divine essence disappeared leaving in its place only a shadow that served to hide my "badness, my flawedness, my ugliness. I became a thing that did not deserve to be in the family frame.

We can forget and even forgive what our parents have done to us but we will never forget how much their abuse hurt us and how through fear we learned to become subservient objects that had no value. And yet as intelligent people we have the awareness that in order to form the foundation of the character of a child, the child has to feel safe, protected and most importantly the child must feel loved and understood.

When a child is made into a subservient object, this child is like a tree without roots. The only thing that is holding this child up is rejection, coldness, indifference and anger. This is parental abandonment, parental abuse and is completely repugnant and should not be used as a parenting techniques.

It is a fallacy that beating children and treating them with utter disrespect will make them into "decent and contributing members of society" The evidence is clear we must stop downplaying the consequences of cruelty against children in our society where children have no rights. As parents we go on unconsciously re-enacting our own upbringing and even when we become aware and choose to make changes, there are parts of us that seem to be blocked inside, impeding us to be the kind of parents that our children rightly deserve to have. We need to be able to break the vicious circle of abuse and regain our humanness and regain the ingredients of

love and compassion that make us incredible human beings that deserve to be treated with dignity and respect.

We all have a history to tell, the kind of history that contains so many common denominators. There are millions of people that have walked in our shoes and we need them to find their voices and speak loud and clear against the abuse of children in any form. There must be no doubt that traumatic childhood experiences alter who we were meant to be. And carrying the secrets of who we are can become a terrible burden. It is like saying: If I tell you who I am will you accept me? This does not matter because when we decide to change the toxic beliefs that have been imprinted in our mind, we will be able to reconcile with who we are supposed to be.

We were born as gifts to the world, and we must reclaim our true identification of who we are in the eyes of our Creator and feel our divine worthiness as human beings. We are not mistakes, we are incredible imperfect human beings and we all have the right to live a life with the opportunity to develop all our potentials. We are strong survivors and we must find our inner strength to stand up and speak for the most vulnerable members of society - our children. We can be the trail-blazers, ensuring that children are raised in environments where acceptance and unconditional love are the main ingredients. As parents we are supposed to teach, guide and protect our children not beat them and turn them into subservient objects.

Our laws and legislation seem to be only empty words - our justice system with regards to protecting our children seems completely "useless". The scale has blindly tipped to protect fiercely the people that abuse children. At least they have lawyers to advise them of their legal rights and provide them with full protection. Who advises the children of their rights that our government has promised to protect but continues to leave unprotected?

Become a promoter of ZERO TOLERANCE AGAINST CHILD ABUSE. It takes awareness, education and courage.

Maria B.

Mental Illness and Recovery

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fiancé has many times acted as my caregiver, but somehow managed to maintain his position as life partner and lover.

I have advocated for the elimination of stigma, given many public talks, and worked with organizations developed to help those with mental illness. In so doing, I furthered my recovery.

While I am not capable of working full time and also maintaining my health, I am recovered to the point where I can say I have a good quality of life. Adjustments have been made, and I have struggled with acceptance, but the medication, my support team and personal resolve have made it possible for me to live independently and have fulfilling relationships. Recovery from mental illness is possible, though not easy.

If you suffer from a mental illness, have hope. You are the expert on yourself. Working collaboratively with your support team, you can meet the challenges of your condition. If you do not have a mental illness, you probably know someone who did or does. One in three persons suffers from a mental illness at some point in his or her

lifetime. Talk to them. Really listen. Get to know that person, an expert on mental illness, having the affliction. Chances are you'll find that they are not that different than "normal" people. Encourage their dreams and goals. Be a friend. Learn as much as you can. Knowledge is power. Education is the key to overcoming stigma.

If you would like to learn more about mental illness, organizations like the Canadian Mental Health Association, Schizophrenia Society, Organization for Bipolar and Affective Disorders (OBAD) have literature and support groups for mental health consumers and caregivers/family members. The public library has many books. The internet is a great resource.

If you can, fight stigma when you encounter it. The media's portrayal of persons with mental illness as violent, and other misconceptions, needs to be countered and questioned. Write to newspapers, or your MLA. Be a part of the solution, of the road to recovery.

by Karen Peterson

Rob's Corner

January 14, 2013,



Alberta, My Home Town, (Well not really)

Moved here along with Lorna my common-law wife and Lori our daughter back in Sept. 1979 in our friends Ford van, from New Westminster BC. Left New West in the afternoon. Remember it getting dark when we reached Kamloops. Had to pull over on some dark deserted road. Roy crawled in the back full of whatever we could bring. Me, Lorna and Lori slept in the front, it was an adventurous trip to say the least. With the sleep over, about 20 hours to get here from BC. Lori wasn't even quite two years old at the time.

PS. Came here looking for a better life.

Brings Back Fond Memories

When I see a young couple out in Kensington holding hands that seem to be in love, it brings me back to January 1977, when I first met Lorna, standing with her girl friend in front of my favourite cafe in downtown New Westminster, BC. It was instant. I fell head over heels! Didn't think I had a chance. Never knew then that our relationship would go much further than a few months. I always took things one day at a time. Most of my friends said they wouldn't give us more than six months.

It's a Real Challenge!

Going on five months this January since my partner in life passed away. I'm totally consumed with the memory of her, and the life we had together for 35 years. We only had two break-ups since we met back in Jan. 1977. It's a tremendous struggle just to get past each day into the next one.

It's Very Hard

It's very hard to write about her (Lorna). As of Jan 24th. 2013 it will have been five months since she passed away. Just glad it wasn't in a hospital bed. It doesn't get any easier for me! Can't even think about the future. I don't or can't see one. I can only think day to day. It's too hard for me to even imagine a life without her. She (Lorna) means more to me now than ever. Don't seem to have any kind of a future without her. I'll do the best I can to get thru these troubling times. Looking forward to getting my first pension check.

From Rob's Corner

Going on 5 months since I lost my common law wife. Not easy for me, but getting used to the fact that she's gone from this world, but her spirit remains. I'm pretty sure she has visited me. I've heard her call out

my name - BOB!! I see her when I close my eyes, just images of her. By the time this gets in the paper it will be going on six months. I'm ready for some sort of companionship, not a serious relationship, just someone I can share some time with once in a while.

Miss Those Years! Miss The Past.

Miss the sounds of children's laughter at my daughter's birthday parties.

Miss having friends over on the weekends, watching movies.

Miss having friends over on New Year's Eve to help bring in the New Year.

Miss Lorna's meat, cheese and snack platter on New Years Eve.

Miss the sound of her voice and her laughter.

Miss talking to her over the telephone, it was comforting to me knowing she would be there when I got home after I finished doing my papers late at nite.

Miss those friends who are no longer here, who passed away at a young age, who were only in their 40's.

Memories are all I have left of this short piece of my past.

Dear Lorna - Thursday Jan 4th, 2013

You meant so much to me. It was hard saying goodbye to you for the last time. It was hard donating your clothes. I'll never forget the little things we shared, such as having pizza or a cup of coffee together, never forget meeting up with you over at the Petro Canada gas station because I had left something behind, such as my keys. How nice it was of you to walk all the way to the theatre. Just the simplest of things I miss about you. Love you forever - Bob.

"You will never hunger no more, you will never thirst no more, you will never suffer no more."

Questions and Comment of the day?

Why in a province of so much wealth are so many people scrambling to find a warm place to sleep? Why in a province like Alberta isn't there more affordable housing? Why in Calgary are there so many people living in poor living conditions, paying such high rent? Why won't this city allow (regulated) secondary basement suites? Are there any?

Comment: I believe secondary suites are illegal in Calgary, not up to standard. Can't

have it both ways, this province needs more workers, at the same time it along with local government are dragging their feet to provide affordable, adequate housing.

Robert Champion

Actions

As I sat at the Diamond Jubilee award ceremony on Saturday January 19th listening to MP Linda Duncan explain why my mother was receiving the medal I couldn't help but think that only half the story was being told about her. I remember when she was gathering food picked up from Safeway's and making soup and sandwiches for the street ministry she started, while she was on welfare herself, recovering from an extremely abusive relationship, and learning how to live again. I remember seeing her sad face in the middle of the night as I listened to her tell her new husband how she would not only find a way out for herself, but that she would take as many people with her as she could. I remember the strangers coming in the house for a safe place to stay for the night, away from the cold, and the thieves, and the police officers who would rough up the stray homeless person found in a back alley. One of our family friends is a lady my mother let stay at our house as she recovered from a mental breakdown. She is living a fairly successful life on AISH in her own house now.

On Saturdays after she sold papers at the market we would all help carry in the 70 pound sacks of organic potatoes, and carrots. Some days Mom and my sister and I would sit around and cut potatoes and other vegetables for the soup that fed hundreds of people, then before the soup was taken to the mission we would have some ourselves for supper. She taught us that if it was not good enough for us to eat it, how could we serve it to others?

Even when we don't realize it, the people around us notice whether we help someone, and are kind, or if we act like a chicken and help peck the person in need down. Every day we have the choice to help someone, or hurt them, which in turn also brightens our own heart, or mars it like tar dripping onto white snow.

By Angelique Branstion.

Studios Alberta

Low income Housing in Three Hills, Alberta

Studios Alberta is the developer of unique projects designed to accommodate single persons on AISH or other disability allowance who are able to live on their own. Our new project in Three Hills is now completed and has suites available for \$400.00 per month. The suites are 325 square foot studios which come equipped with new fridges, stoves and air conditioning. Each suite is totally self-contained with its own entrance door into a central courtyard. Tenants are responsible for their own utilities which should average around \$125.00 per month depending on the tenant's usage. The project is located in the centre of town on a west facing ridge with a very nice view and pleasant surroundings. Laundry facilities are not provided but there is a laundry facility close by. No pets. Tenants must complete applications.

For more information call Yvonne Dean at 1 888-963-5698

E-mail: info@studiosalberta.com

URL: <http://studiosalberta.com>



A 14-HR LIVE HOMELESSNESS BROADCAST FROM SUN DOWN ON FEB 20 TO SUN UP ON FEB 21, THE 11TH ANNUAL HOMELESSNESS MARATHON. TUNE INTO YOUR LOCAL COMMUNITY RADIO OR MEDIACOOP.CA. FOR MORE INFO: CKUT.CA/HOMELESS

Thank You to Calgary Drop-In Centre for the Christmas Gifts

I had a Meet & Greet Coffee on the afternoon of Wed, Dec 19, 2012!

I had been chosen by Dana S., Assistant to The Exec. Dir. Debbie Newman, who told me I was selected by the Calgary Drop-In Centre to be their recipient of the Adopt a Vendor Program for the Christmas 2012 Season! It was unreal and I was just ecstatic when I got the e-mail! I was so overwhelmed with all their generosity and care and concern for me!

I was never a part of an organization as one of their own extended family before. I can say this Christmas Season had been the best I ever had of all the past Christmas Seasons.

I want to thank the administration and the DI Staff for gathering together to make this wonderful wish come true for me and the friendship and laughter, we had shared over coffee and small talk for this 2012 Meet and Greet for the Holiday Season!

Also thank you administration and DI Staff for the signed Christmas card! I will treasure that card for years to come. I have been a long time vendor and look forward to delivering the paper to the DI Administration and the DI Staff, for every month of 2012 and into the 2013 year.

You are all caring people, I want to thank Pat McDonald, Client Advocate, Dana S., Assistant to Exec. Dir., Dir. Debbie Newman and Counselling Staff Andrew J. and Estellita B. for your on-going, caring continuing support in buying the Alberta Street Newspaper for 2012 - 2013. You have all shown understanding on how I had felt and your kind thoughts and empathy, when reading my past stories about when I was a teenager, homeless and living on the cruel streets,



when it was called The Eastend Calgary.

Pat M. had purchased the Calgary Street Talk for every month in the early years of 2000. During that time I had written about myself, a past homeless Christmas street story with the former Calgary Street Talk Newspaper.

I also dedicate this writing to the past DI Administration & DI Staff I had known since back in the early 1990's. Then today like Pat M. & Dana S. & Debbie Newman, The Counselling Staff, Andrew J. and Estellita B. You have been commended & with the unconditional care and have gone that extra mile in every way to fulfill my needed requests, whenever possible!

I want to thank Dana for keeping me informed about homeless and street events going on with the homeless and street agencies! Your on-going continued support has warmed my spirit, unexpected and my

expressions and reactions are sometimes said without words.

Thank you to my customers

I want thank everyone for their support for buying the ASN paper from me, for 2012, and to thank my long term customers who have purchased the paper from year to year as well as the customers who have just wanted to buy a paper at my paper stand every month.

Without your support, throughout the monthly selling of the paper I wouldn't be able to buy the small food supplements and coffee to sooth the changing weather, while selling the paper at my paper stand throughout the year. You have all kept me motivated to keep writing a story for each month regardless of a slow month due to changes in my everyday schedule of my lifestyle! And you all know that the changes in the weather can affect to me being there at the paper stand. I also appreciate your patience in knowing that you can always get the back issues that you have missed. I'm just so glad now that I'm now able to write a street story for each month. There are other stories that I have plans to write about in the coming months ahead for 2013!

Once again, Thank you for your Support, Your 23rd Avenue & 4th Street Vendor, in Calgary AB.

Story and photo by Andie W.L.

Two Alberta Street News vendors pass away Christmas Eve



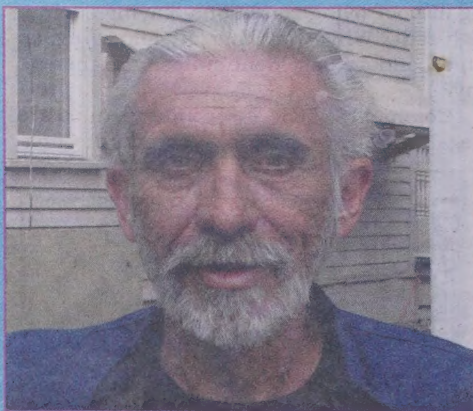
Sandra Cardinal

Street News vendor Sandra Cardinal passed away December 24, 2012 in her apartment after a lengthy illness. She was a vendor for more than eight years.

Funeral services were held at Saddle Lake, Alberta on Jan. 4, 2013, and a memorial service was held at Sacred Heart Church of the First Peoples in Edmonton on Jan. 18.

Sandra is survived by her companion Clifford Mitchell, her son and two daughters, brothers and sisters. She grew up in Saddle Lake where she learned the Cree language and culture from her grandparents. Sandra faced hardships in her life, surviving years of homelessness before moving into an apartment two years ago.

Sandra phoned Alberta Street News two weeks before her death to say thank you for the Christmas gifts she received from Rosalind Harper through the papers Adopt a Vendor for Christmas project.



Aaron Bishop

Aaron Bishop passed away Christmas eve at the age of 64. He was one of the first vendors to sell the street paper. His chosen location was the east entrance of the Coliseum Safeway's Store.

Aaron experienced periods of homelessness since the death of his wife seven years ago. He was housed for a time at Urban Manor and after being homeless again, lived for a year with Glen and Linda Dumont, before ending up on the street again when Glen passed away. He was a regular at Operation Friendship where he went for his morning coffee.

Aaron never received his hoodie and other Christmas gifts from Alberta Street News that were a donation from Delcron developments.

Story and photos by Linda Dumont



Calgary vendor **Nick Diklich** sends his greetings and his thanks to all the people who supported him in 2012 through buying Alberta Street News, and to those who donated Christmas gifts and money to him through the Adopt a Vendor program in 2012.